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OUR NATIONAL UNION:

A

THANKSGIVING DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN THE

First Trinitarian Congregational Church

NOVEMBER 29, 1860,

BY TRUMAN M. POST, D. D.



ST. LOUIS:

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MDCCCLX.

SAINT LOUIS, DEC. 1st, 1860.

REV. DR. POST:

DEAR SIR.—We heard with great satisfaction and pleasure your excellent discourse on Thanksgiving Day. Fully sympathizing with the views expressed by you in that discourse, and believing that they would be eminently useful in fostering in the minds of our fellow citizens, sentiments of patriotism and affection for the Union, we would most respectfully request of you a copy for publication.

FRANCIS WHITTAKER,
WYLLYS KING,
J. S. McCUNE,
RUSSELL SCARRITT,
SAM'L PLANT.

SAINT LOUIS, DEC. 10, 1860.

MESSRS. FRANCIS WHITTAKER,
WYLLYS KING,
J. S. McCUNE,
RUSSELL SCARRITT,
SAM'L PLANT.

DEAR SIR.—Your expressed wish or opinion would ever have weight with me. If the discourse, of which you ask a copy, shall contribute to strengthen in any mind the sentiment of love and devotion to our National Union, under which this people have lived so happily, and so long, I shall thank God for it. I am conscious at least it is honest in its argument, and conciliatory in its design. As I had it not in manuscript at the time of its delivery, I may not have been able exactly to restore it; but it is, I think, substantially the same.

Very truly yours,

T. M. POST.

DISCOURSE.

II CHRONICLES, XXX: 12. Also the hand of God was to give them one heart.

I have selected this text as expressive of the fact that National unity of counsel and will, is the gift of God; and fitly to be ranked with themes claiming grateful commemoration. It stands in this passage, also historically connected with a most memorable and genuine Thanksgiving. Judah and Israel, for more than two hundred years, had been disunited, much to the opprobrium and disaster, moral and political, of both. Hezekiah had at that time sent couriers about to the entire Hebrew nation, inviting them once more to unite at least in the great National Festival of the Passover. They were variously received in different quarters. But to some of the people "God gave one heart to do the King's commandment." The consequence was that they kept a most remarkable Thanksgiving; and for even twice the usual number of seven days. For, says the Chronicle,

"The children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the Priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord.

"And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the Lord: and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace offerings, and making confession to the Lord God of their fathers.

"And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days; and they kept other seven days with gladness.

"For Hezekiah, king of Judah, did give to the congregation a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep; and a great number of Priests sanctified themselves.

"And all the congregation of Judah, with the Priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah rejoiced.

"So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon, the Son of David king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem.

"Then the Priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling place, even unto Heaven."*

That occasion, too, stands out from a ground of troublous and evil times; even as this present. Indeed, the origin of our Thanksgiving Festival dates back to the days of famine and sickness and savage terrors, amid our fathers. It was well thus. Praise to God is ever due and comely. Such time constitute, moreover, the most effective setting of blessings, less appreciated otherwise; as the diamond gleams brightest enchased by jet, or the star shines serenest and purest on a ground of stormy sky.

It is well, too, for spiritual excellency and happiness, in the darkest times to devote seasons expressly to the duty of grateful joy—to look at the bright aspects of gloomiest things, and to study gladness. A resolution to do this will often resolve the murkiness and sadness of a day of cloud and tempest.

To day I feel that we are called to set our joy on a groundwork of sorrows and troubles. We meet amid financial perplexities, and solicitude and sorrow for our country—a sorrow that sits at each fireside as a domestic grief. Still let us consecrate the day to devout gladness. And we have ample cause. As we call for them, incentives to thanksgiving crowd on us like the stars or the sea, from nature, providence and our entire being. But I have thought it most salutary, and demanded by the times, and by your own feelings, to select as our theme, for this occasion, OUR NATIONAL UNION, thus far conserved, through the goodness of God, for almost a century. The more so, as the influences of political institutions, from their very commonness, are wont to become to us as the sunlight and atmosphere; appreciated only by their loss or perversion, as are these, when infected by pestilence, or shaded by disastrous eclipse. Blessings grow dear as they die or are in peril.

Our National Union would be worthy of thanksgiving for what it has wrought, were it to die to-day; we would still gather around it, as around the body of a dead friend, and commemorate its benefits, and thank God it has lived so long; may we not, the rather, this day gather around its life, with prayers and vows for its continuance. And as the feuds of brothers are oft healed or forgot beside the mortal sickness of a mother, may we not hope that our political asperities and antagonisms may now be hushed awhile, as we watch beside the deadly peril of our National Union, the mother of us all. May not our filial piety be quickened, our feeling of fraternity be reanimated, and our hearts be softened, purified and enlarged—as all mutual recrimination dismissed the while—we recount her benefits to us all, in a memorable and happy past?

Let us then to-day, banishing complaint and accusation, render to our God thanksgiving for the fraternal tie that has still bound us together as virtually one Nation, for four-score years; while the whole earth meanwhile—East of us in the old world, and South of us in the new—has been rocking with revolution and change.

And first we thank Him for the Union of the Revolution; a Union amid Colonies accustomed to act, for a century, as separate peoples; divided more widely, even than our present extremes of territory, by time and difficulty of intercommunication, as also by habitudes of thought and feeling, and of social and political life; and presenting greater difficulties to combination of counsels and interests than now. We thank God that spite of all these, He gave them "one heart" to achieve political emancipation and a place among the Nations; and in achieving this, to pour out as one, their best blood and treasure—all for each and each for all, means or extremes alike—standing shoulder to shoulder, true brothers, in that terrible hour.

We thank God again for the Union of the Confederation; whereby they entered as one people into the scale of Nations, and presented a league for the most part impregnable to foreign intrigue and influence; and were enabled to live together as brethren, though with governmental tie very loose and precarious. Especially we thank Him, that when its fatal defects became manifest in the paralysis and impoverishment of the Federal Government, amid the conflicting claims, legislations, judicatures and commercial regulations of States, He enabled them to go through the fearful experiment of the dissolution of one government and the creation of another, without bloodshed or tumult, in the quiet of a profound peace; presenting a spectacle without a parallel in history, and of which any people were presumptuous to invite a repetition. And we thank Him that He gave them finally one heart to form the UNION OF THE CONSTITUTION: expressly projected and ordained by them, "To form a more perfect Union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to themselves and their posterity."*

It was God, we believe, that gave them one heart to overcome the almost insuperable difficulties of conflicting opinion and seemingly conflicting interest in the way, and to frame an instrument on the whole, the most perfect of its order ever devised by man. All human things are imperfect. But its seeming diverse defects as looked at from different sides, are, most of them, the only practicable resultants of interests, complex and divisive, framed into one system; and representative of necessary compromises. They were essential to the creation of the instrument, which, if not the best ideal, appears to have been the best possible for the time. And who shall say it were better there had been none? that it has not, with all its alleged faults, been still an incalculable blessing? The wonder is not that our fathers did not create a better, but that they created one at all. Should we be likely to form one more perfect? If in

*See Preamble to the Constitution.

such hope we destroy this, we shall, I fear, emulate the crime of the daughters of Pelias; and see from its mangled fragments, however we stir the cauldron, no superior form, no living shape reborn.

We thank God this day that, for nearly the life of three generations, this instrument has to such an extent accomplished its express designs, of "union," "justice," "domestic tranquillity," "defense," "liberty," "general welfare;" that it has secured a more perfect union, and thereby presented us in foreign relations, not as a league of States, but one Nation; wielding in diplomacy and arms the strength of a first class Nation, and now speaking with the voice of more than thirty millions of people; and that thereby we have been safe and respected everywhere, our flag the protecting wing of a powerful empire over our citizens on all lands and every sea; that we have stood erect, and not crouched and crawled amid the Nations; have presented an impregnable front to undue or divisive foreign influence, whether by intrigue, intimidation or corruption; that we have been saved from the melancholy history and example of all other confederacies in the presence of great despotic and centralized Powers—Powers which passed from intrigue and bribery to Patrons, Protectors, Tyrants and Ravagers. I thank God for the union that has saved us from that wretched clientship of States, presented in case of the above Confederacies; prosecuting emulous suits in foreign courts; dupes and victims of foreign cupidity, treachery and ambition; and purchasing advantages over a rival, by dishonorable alliance or subserviency, by mutual betrayals, and finally by sacrifice of their own free existence. Would that our countrymen might pause to read at this day the history of the Hellenic States after the glorious war of Independence with Persia; the fearfully graphic sketch which Thucydides has given of the woes and crimes and shames of the Peloponesian war; and the story of the unutterably sad and opprobrious ages after his picture—the ages of the death and dissolution of a people, corrupted, conquered, enslaved, crushed under successive overlaying despotisms of Europe and Asia.

Let us thank God for the contrast to theirs, which our history has thus far presented through the union of these States. And also for that union as a means whereby a central government—sovereign in its sphere of interests properly national, and armed with the full complement of powers, diplomatic, legislative, judicial and executive for its self-maintenance and enforcement, and with a national exchequer, army and navy—is made to so harmonize with state sovereignties, in like manner independent and supreme in their sphere, that they can no more clash in their proper functions, than planets with their satellite moons may collide with the solar system in which they are inorbed.

We owe thanks that thus we have been enabled for four-score years, to

blend together in our nation the advantages, seemingly incompatible, of large and small states, the minutely and thoroughly distributed life and culture and democratic activities of one, with the massive strength and order, and the larger comparisons and cosmopolitan civilization of the other; a combination, the ideal of which would unite the brilliant, intense and thorough vitality of the Hellenic Politics with the stability, regularity and power of Imperial Rome. We have thus been enabled to unite municipal freedom with strong central government, local variety with national uniformity, and individual liberty with imperial order and security.

We would render thanks, too, this day for a union, whereby we secure a uniformity of administration and judicature in interests of national order and reach; and avoid the irritations and perplexities of conflicting local ordinances and jurisprudence; and especially, whereby we have the arbitrament of Law and not of the sword above states; that contests between States are not driven for settlement to the fields of battle; a blessing we can estimate only in contrast of a state of things where such controversies fret through diplomatic intrigue, and forceful reprisals to war, or form the opening for foreign intrigue, corruption and ambition; as in the case of the States of Ancient Greece or the principalities of Mediæval Italy and Germany. May we never learn to prize this blessing by its loss.

We have, moreover, reasons for gratitude this day, that we have so long enjoyed a union whereby these great interests are secured, not only without enfeeblement, but with the strengthening, of political liberties; a system not like a Grecian dome, weakened by expansion, but like the Gothic minster, where the rising of arch upon arch, with all their tracery and interlacing, makes each part the stronger with the strength and massiveness of the entire structure. So are individual and local liberties strengthened and guaranteed by the interlacings of State and National prerogatives, that each part guards the whole and the whole each part. Our State liberties are safer for our National sovereignty, and are likely to be crushed beneath its ruins if it fall.

We owe thanks for our National Union, also, in that under it is possible a great commercial and economical system, embracing the breadth of a continent and zone; whereby industry, trade, productions, enterprise and internal improvements, have been left free to consult for the mutual correspondencies of climate, soil, position and the geographic configuration of a continent, unembarrassed by local tariffs, custom houses, passports and sumptuary laws; and unburthened by the expenses, civil and military, of numerous petty nationalities, each with its governmental officials, its armies and navies and foreign missions; a union which convoys the trade of remotest seas to our shores secure under our national colors, and under

which we have conquered the desert, the wilderness and the mountains, and unite the commerce of two oceans to a continental transit through one people, of one speech, and under one arch of empire: a union which has blent, with a most free and powerful civilization, a domestic tranquillity under which has been achieved a degree of physical and social prosperity without parallel in the history of mankind. The Arts have flourished, enterprise has been quickened, our territories have been improved, empires conquered from the wilderness, wealth has been accumulated, and commerce quickened and expanded into the most distant regions, and in the midst of profound peace.

Meanwhile not only have material interests prospered; great social problems have been resolved, education has been fostered, intelligence has been diffused, prejudices have been corrected, ideas enlarged and modified, and a civilization larger, broader, more national, more composite and cosmopolitan, been elaborated. Society has achieved a permanent advance, and the kingdom of God has been expanding itself and accumulating power for future conquest. History presents no other such picture of liberty, order and happiness. Shall we, in the wantonness and caprice of gambling-venture, put all this to peril? Amid all this our National Union stands as a vast Magistracy of the Peace. Shall we now tear it down?

Even Despotism has received the gratitude of history as a vast police of nations, and under *that* we are sure to seek domestic tranquillity, if sacrilegiously we subvert that National Republic which now keeps the peace of our vast empire of States.

The Historian of the Decline and Fall, pronounces the era of the Antonines one of the happiest in the history of the world. True, under the dome of a universal despotism the earth was dying all the while. The loss of liberty was the loss of life. Humanity was growing more emaculate; the pulse of civilization beating feebler, and the shadows of the coming night falling faster from the Indus to the Atlantic.

But there was physical well-being, personal safety and unembarrassed commerce under an enforced universal order. The Imperial Robber permitted no other than herself. To Syria and Egypt and Macedon, to the Iberian and Gaul and the Moor, she said "keep peace with each other." From her seat in the Capitol she looked forth, the supreme court, the sovereign arbiter and lawgiver, the enforcer of order, to the world; the centre of a universal magistracy and police, before which the clangor of national discords and arms was hushed, and under whose arch of empire commerce convoyed her argosies and her caravans and mercantile ventures, in unobstructed ways, through peaceful and prosperous peoples, from the Erythrean Gulf to the Isle of Britain.

So far was Gibbon right that the era of the Antonines shows amid the contrasts of anarchy, discord and violence between which it occurs, as an Age of Gold. Peace and order are the necessities of nations. Better, infinitely, a Russian despotism than the bloody anarchy of the Druses and Maronites. We should find the most stringent of military despotisms, a refuge from that wretched tumult of petty, jangling, crouching, corrupt, Macchiavellian nationalities, which opens on us through the portals of disunion. From a history like that of Mexico or Central America—whom we should be likely to follow with even bloodier trace—we should find relief even under the despotism of the Czars or Napoleons. *That* would be the certain and the most hopeful solution of the wretched imbroglio. But shall we for this, in wantonness and wilfulness, cast away a system which, for three-fourths of a century, has been demonstrated capable of wedding together order and life, liberty and law, in a civilization, imperial in its territorial range, and cosmopolitan in its elements and ideas?

True, objections may be raised from various quarters, diverse and antagonist as the quarters they come from, against the Constitution of our Union. Were all invited, as in the case of the ancient picture hung up for criticism, to mark their opinions of defect, they would probably leave it but one blot. And so, if their marking of excellencies was called for. And the defects of one class would probably be excellencies to another. I may have my serious objections to the instrument; you have yours; and a third party has his; and so on infinitely. But our objections are discrepant and contradictory. For the most part they confute each other. But with them all, who does not believe that, with all imputed faults, our Constitution has yet been, on the whole, one of the greatest blessings ever granted by God to any nation? And when, and how are we likely to get a better? This is susceptible of peaceful amendment, if necessary, according to its own provisions. With much reluctance and hesitation indeed, should I enter on the work of amending, lest I should take from its excellence or its reverence. Still, if defects or inequities in it seem no longer endurable, can we not confer and arrange in reference to them, fraternally and constitutionally? But if we destroy to rebuild, from its ruins no ree stable organism will be likely to re-arise. The hands that tear it down, I verily believe, dig beneath themselves an abyss. Demoniac forms and faces the rather will emerge from the seething deeps, that shall wander forth to mock and madden through a funeral century!

The Constitution, too, we should remember, is blameless for many of the abuses accomplished under it, and claiming its sanction. It has had strains put upon it, that it should never have been called to bear. The misconstructions of hate or of worship; the distortions of passion, fraud, tyranny and fanaticism; the glosses of parties, creeds and interests; alleged

conflict with natural right or Divine law, or arrogation of prerogative superior to such right and law ; reverence for its name invoked in defence of wrong, until men have been tempted to question the duty of reverence ; threats of dissolution employed as the leverage for advancing the interests of faction, till men have begun to inquire what the organic instrument of our Union was worth—now, for abuses of this kind the Constitution is not answerable ; though by them it has suffered ; and even more from worship than hate : for the arrogation of perfection, contradicted by a single fault, loses too oft our entire confidence. The god dethroned sinks below the mortal, and idolatry confuted, turns to contempt.

But while our Constitution claims not to be worshipped as God's absolute work, it does ask to be revered and loved as the best of its kind, thus far achieved or practicable among the nations. Could the spirit of its framers still breathe on us from their mould, it would still utter to this Union a monition like that of the Latin Lyrist to Ancient Rome, "While you bear yourself subordinate to the gods, you hold empire." Human constitutions are manifestly vital only as subordinate to the eternal constitution of God. Transcending that limit they of necessity undermine and subvert themselves. They destroy the moral basis on which alone they must ultimately rest. The cry of union, therefore, raised to cover wrongs ; to consecrate injustice or impiety ; to shield with inviolableness absurdities and abuses ; to stifle free questionings of the reason or of the moral and religious sentiment, or to claim our honor and trust for men, in whom, if love of union still abides, it grows like the mistletoe, on the decayed trunk of all other virtues—such treatment of the Constitution is most illegitimate and most unfair to any human ordinance of government ; it must in the end destroy it. Nothing can prove more clearly the excellence of our own, than that for so many years it has endured the strain put on it by such treatment, and yet its hold on the nation's heart has not been broken, but it is still strong in the love and reverence of the millions of this people. But, in truth, the utmost of alleged grievances, lying in the course of its past or probable abuses, are as nothing compared with the infernal gulf it now covers and closes. Indeed, we shall best estimate the importance of these objections, in the light of the historic landscape that opens upon us, if the Constitution to which they attach, is destroyed. Our debt of gratitude to Heaven for the past, can be best estimated by reversing the picture we have taken.

Suppose, then, our country is led along the way in which present disunion movements are marshalling us ; our National Banner no longer floats in the heaven ; the architects of ruin have had their way ; the North American Republic, with its glorious memories and hopes, disappears from history ; a gulf opens before us like that seen of the Hebrew Pro-

phet, on which the four winds strove, and from which issued strange, fierce, ravening political forms. Chaos is there, and forms as baleful as waited around the portals of eternal night. Into that abyss I care not to look. Suppose we have floundered through it: dissolution in all its stages—secession upon secession—disunion on disunion—revolution after revolution, have been accomplished. Political disintegration has reached its utmost term—what term, who shall tell, when once the process of dissolution has begun, and public faith been dissolved. New combinations wrestling with new destructions, emergent—who may forecast or describe them? How many confederacies, leagues, oligarchies, empires, Eastern, Western, Northern, Southern and Middle; of the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Mississippi, the Lakes, the Gulf or the great Basin? But it emerges—order in some fashion—from the dark and crimson gulf. Now what shall be the relation of these States to Foreign Powers? What their place in the scale of nations?

It is the imagination of Astronomers that once, between the orbits Jupiter and Mars, there shone a planet glorious as Jupiter, object of admiration and delight to any eye that beheld, and among the lords of the system amid which it rolled. A seemingly blank abyss, revealing to the telescopic vision alone, asteroids of feeble, dim and servile disc and divergent ever-parted orbs—this is the field once filled with its brightness but where the fragments of its ruin, untraced and untraceable, wander now darkling forevermore.

Such appears our change in the horoscope of dissolution. Our proud bright sphere among the nations, knows us no more. Our country speaks no more, in foreign diplomacy, with the voice of thirty millions of people. It enters in foreign relations no longer with the wealth, the art and productions, the commerce, the arms of so many millions, in its scale. Its colors, that spread as the wing of a mighty empire over each ship and each citizen on the uttermost land and main, have fallen as a blighted constellation from the sky. I see now a medley of petty States, creeping and crouching among the nations. Their proud port is gone. On the land and sea their flag is veiled, or floats by sufferance. Rival States appear instead; alien, hostile, in shifting combinations of league and counter-league, intrigue and adverse intrigue; the minor clustering around the larger, or banding against them—as in the case of Austria and Prussia, in the modern Germanic, or of Sparta and Athens, in the ancient Grecian system of States—the stronger, whether in strife or conspiracy, equally afflicting the weaker, and each and all fomenting within others faction and insurrection. A medley of States in such relations to each other, I see exposed to insult and injury, at the caprice of great powers at home and abroad; wearying the ear of foreign courts with suits of obsequious rivals, suppliant and accusatory, waiting for patronage or protection

around the purlieus of palaces ; like client nations attendant on the Roman Senate, or the Hellenic cities intriguing at the courts of Persia, Macedon, Syria or Egypt. We should become like Mediæval and Modern Italy or Germany, the football and prize of foreign policies, and the quarry of foreign ambition. Our Union, which, as a wall of adamant, has presented itself impervious as well to foreign intrigue and gold as to foreign arms, being gone, we should soon find ourselves penetrated, through and through, with corrupt or divisive influences from abroad, baleful as Macedonian faction or Persian bribery. We should enact over again the wretched histories of Modern Italy in the presence of the powerful monarchies of France and Spain, and of the Othos, Fredericks and Hapsburgs—their arena of intrigue and battle, trampled of foreign policies and war. Now this is no fancy picture ; it is a prophecy of all past history. Incredulity here is infatuation. Are we better or wiser than past times, that like causes shall no longer produce like effects ? Our present history, certainly, of tumult for disunion, springing from the bosom of unparalleled prosperity and profound peace, is encouraging no such conceit of superior reason, sobriety or goodness.

Meantime, with the perishing of our Union, our great continental system of commerce and of internal improvements, whether of private or governmental enterprise, disappear. Amid the distrusting and rivalries, the restrictions, tariffs, passports and conflicting policies, of alien States, and amid the tumults of factions, forays and wars, this of course would perish. Our commercial systems could no longer adjust themselves to the correspondencies and configuration of a vast and imperial field, to a continental arrangement of rivers and mountains. The strength of thirty millions of people could no longer be levied to grapple with the desert and mountain. Our Pacific railroad would fade out, like Alexander's projected pathway of occidental traffic, for ages. Our dream of the trajection of Asiatic trade, through peaceful and prosperous millions, of one speech under one empire, from ocean to ocean, without passports or customs, must vanish with the phantom of an imperial past. And not only so, but the land is meanwhile devoured by its multiplied exactions. Instead of the civil, military and diplomatic budget of one nation, it now has to bear that of nearly two score of different sovereignties, each compelled to keep a large military force to guard its frontier and collect its customs.

Industry, art and enterprise, pressed down under these burdens, can no longer, as now, enter into competition with the markets of the world. Impoverishment sets in, like consumption on our peoples, while passport and custom-house systems vex the frontier, and the tax-gatherer, together with a despotic police and espionage, harasses the interior. Under just such influences as these, and springing too from just such a condition as

disunion now offers us, the richest prosperities have faded away; whole climates have withered, and the curse of ages descended on the fairest earth and sky.

Moreover, with the perishing of our unity of legislation, administration and judicature in matters of national order, countless irritations would arise, and countless discrepancies and antipathies would be loosed, that would fret more and more toward hatred and war. Those prerogatives of the central government, which now are the means and guarantee of domestic tranquillity, when broken up and distributed among some thirty-three sovereignties—soon to be multiplied to we know not how many—would be constantly elashing at State borders. This political structure broken up, all the edges of the fracture will be sharp and dentated. Oppositions of policies and interests, and of laws and judicatures, contests of claims extending across State lines, and now of national reach and relation, will then constantly deepen the contrasts and repugnancies of civilization. Alien sentiments will more and more grow up, and more and more they will be exasperated to dislike and hate of neighbors as foreigners. How long would this continue before the frontier would throng with armed men? Yea, each State, then a nation, must permanently be so thronged, watching and guarding against its neighbor, with fortress and standing armies. The frontiers must permanently bristle with forts and bayonets, and be vexed with passports, customs, spies, and gendarmes. And how long before war would flash along such frontiers? A spark would ignite it. Occasions would never be wanting. Antipathies and resentments, and discrepancies of interest or of civilization, if they will not allow our living together as one country, will not, we may be assured, leave us peacefully side by side with each other as foreign ones. Especially is this hopeless, when we reflect that the original difficulty is not political, but intellectual and moral, arising, not from unity of government nor removable by political severance, but having its ground in diversities of civilization, culture, social order, political economy, and moral convictions; convictions amenable only to reason and religion, and not to be arrested by State lines or prohibitory laws or armed men, but only by a border of desolations over which no social relations should stretch, no press, railroad or telegraph should extend the contagion of thought, and no living breath might pass. Indeed, that strife, upon which, as a ground-swell, all other strifes of the present crisis arise, and which it is hoped to quell by disunion, would burn all the more fiercely for the proposed remedy; a remedy which, even regarded from the stand point of those who use it, seems like stopping the plague, by breaking down the walls of a pest house. The evils complained of would be cured by dissolution no more than would cholera. They would soon, indeed, acquire four-fold exasperation, and

without present restraint. How long could this continue without inflaming into war? especially as then we would have no longer any Supreme Court as common arbiter.

In this respect, the anticipated position of these States, after dissolution, contrasts fearfully with the present. The Federal Judiciary abolished, the sword alone is empire. Might alone makes right. Our judicial process is war. Our court rooms widen to the field of battle. In each such quarrel, too, each party, aiming to strengthen itself by alliance, would draw as many neighbors as it could lay hold of, into the conflagration. And on every side animosities, grudges, antipathies and counter claims would never be wanting, along which would kindle the contagion of war.

And even if these causes are insufficient, and evil and ambitious instigators among ourselves shall be quiet, all around will be foreign powers, who may think they find their interest in our weakness and quarrels, and whose intrigue and gold would not be wanting to stir up war; till, as Philip was called in at last as President of the Hellenic Amphictyony, so we should inaugurate some Foreign Power as our Supreme Court, our Protector, our Master.

Indeed, abolish this single feature of our Constitution—a Supreme Federal Tribunal—and you open the closures of the pit. Violence, tumult, rapine, massacre, war—an infernal troupe—will enter this land through a breach in this National Union, wandering and wasting, till they devour it. And over it, and around it, as a quarry, meanwhile will wait foreign intrigues, corruption and ambition, like vultures around a field of carnage.

Such results from National Disunion are plainly prophesied by history, and indeed foreshadowed in the present condition of sentiments and affairs. Earth breeds the same race of men now as of old. If we tread their paths, we shall dash on their Ruin. The past warns us, no strifes are like those of brothers; no wars like civil wars. Community of blood and civilization seems only to work the fiercer and more cruel hate. Few wars have been so atrocious as those between Judah and Israel, after the peaceful realm of Solomon was sundered. The Peloponesian war—a war among States related to each other in many respects as we are—breaking out after an era of prosperity and glory, raged with atrocity and cruelty beyond the common measure of barbaric war; and the strife they opened blazed on unextinguishable from age to age, till it burned up the land. It became desolations; and the wilderness and wild beast returned again. The wolf and the banditti hunted together over the lands, before rich with cities of opulence and art, a dense and prosperous population, and with vineyards and olive groves. A blight seemed to have fallen on earth and air and on man. Art with nature seemed to have perished from the clime of beauty; and genius with love and honor, from the human soul. Even at the close

of the Peloponesian war—which raged on for a generation, extending its contagion to three continents and over all the seas, until it burned through the whole Greek world—at the close of this war, historians tell us, humanity seemed exhausted; all truth and brotherhood, all enthusiasm, generosity and benevolence, had perished: no freshness of life was left to men or society; no youthful look toward the future; no faith in men or God or virtue; the demoralization was dreadful. But the wound of civil strife was not staunch, when the victim seemed exhausted. It was incurable. The plague of discord had struck through the entire Hellenic race and burned on like a poison in the veins, through two-and-a-half centuries. All power of permanent confederacy, or even of peace among the Greek States, seemed gone. There was no public spirit, no mutual trust: The pulse of Hellenic life, with occasional convulsions rending the victim and ultimating in death spasm, ebbed on feebler and colder. In those sad ages, men lived on without greatness or honor, without generous aspiration and almost without interest and without hope. Civil Disunion, like a Nemesis from fraternal blood that could not be laid, wandered over the land from age to age, till it devoured it and the inhabitants thereof; that curse, which, if we now wickedly let it loose on these lands and if history follows with us her way-marks in other ages, will rage, unappeasable like a doom of God, till it has consumed them.

The Thirty Years War amid the confederated States of Germany in the seventeenth century, that burned through one entire generation till four-fifths of the entire population were devoured by it and the forest and the beast of prey returned upon the land again—this may instruct us what to dread when discord bears her torch through a system of States like ours. Entire realms were ruined and the civilization of the land beat back for a century. It has not even recovered fully to this day.

Italy may also warn us of the effects of Disunion amid small States constituting naturally one country: Italy brilliant with wealth and culture, but for centuries incapable of peace; cursed with eternal feuds, and meshed in endless intrigues and conspiracies, and varying a history of internal faction and assassination, with the calling in of foreign arms; the quarry of surrounding despotisms, convulsed within and torn from without, till after the ravages of Charles the VIIIth, as one of her own sons describes her, she resembled the dessicated skin of a victim lacerated and drained by a beast of prey.

For more than a thousand years, the curse of implacable incurable disunion, amid the petty States of her peninsula has paralysed and poisoned her.

Now, she has the sympathies and prayers of the good throughout the world, as she is heroically struggling to heal her long plague of political

division, and to extricate herself from that imbroglia of petty nationalities, that have made her, for opprobrious centuries, powerless abroad, and corrupt, wretched and enslaved at home; defeating all those gifts of nature and genius that made her once lord of the earth. Slowly, toilsomely, bloodily, through ages of sin and shame and sorrow, she now emerges from that Tartarus. Shall we now plunge our land into it? Shall we, for alleged present grievances, real or imaginary, cast away that Union vainly sought for by other nations through centuries, with sighs, and tears, and blood? Once cast away, we may for ages invoke it, but it will not return.

But what Schiller or Thucydides shall recite the last days of this North American Republic? What Macchiavelli or Tacitus, narrate its process of dissolution? When taxation, and corruption and tyranny and war shall unite to slay it? What hope shall there be for the independence of small States in these times of violence? Must they not be crushed in the collision of larger ones like a small craft between men of war? Yea, what hope shall there be for the political liberties of any, large or small? The standing force requisite to be kept up by States so situated in relation to each other, and in some of them to keep down large servile populations, surrounded by foreign States of alien institutions, and to enforce the police and censorship necessary for this purpose, upon thought and speech, could hardly consist with the liberties of the small sovereignties that must sustain them.

Unquestionably the exigencies, the very existence of such States in the circumstances, will require a strong, consolidated, centralized government. The elements may seethe for a while after the act of dissolution. It will be difficult for States or men to recombine and to trust each other in any new confederacy after such violation of the old; and a chapter of Mexican or Central American History may await us. But from the necessities of the case, this cannot last. The ruin will at length crystallize, but it will be in adamant and dungeon forms. Let us not deceive ourselves. The loss of liberty—despotism—probably military despotism—according to all indications of history and philosophy, certainly lies not far in the distance in the path of disunion, to those who shall lead in the movement. The passion and irritation required to tear down our system, give poor promise of ability to build another in its place. If directed by supposed interest, such a course is a dreadful mistake; if by resentment, it is suicide.

It is sad attempting to trace the processes of dying States—States that die on, after liberty itself is dead; to watch the progress of internal corruption and external violence—the vulture and the worm—that work the dissolution of the corpse of empires. It were sad attempting to forecast through what progressive stages, what death spasms, what convulsions and baffled

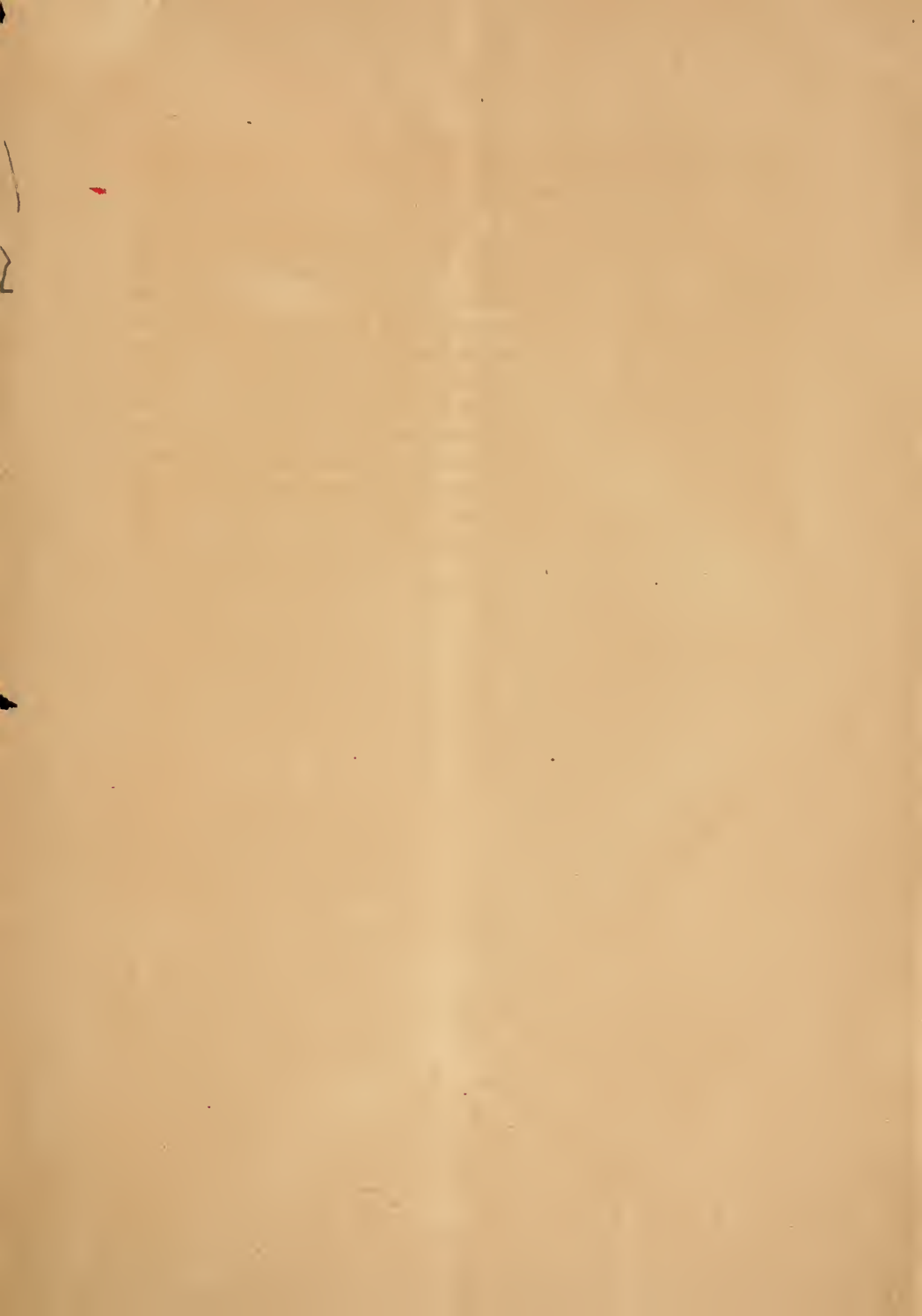
struggles for recovery, this country may go down to the sides of the pit; as the Grecian States vainly strove through Ætolian, Spartan, Achaian confederations, to arrest the destiny that dragged them down. Nor is the problem soluble to mortal prophecy. Heaven grant that it may never be solved by our experience! But argument from history seems clearly to open before disunion, a valley of death-shade, along which waits the inevitable hour—reached through what processes who shall tell!—when the Muse of History, laying her hand on the heart of our Republic, that has once beat so proud and strong, with glorious memories and hopes, and finding its convulsive throb stilled, shall pronounce it “dead;” and wretched ages beyond, like those that waited on dead empires past, shall enter to bury her.

Let us not deceive ourselves, nor think to hide things by euphemism. Call disunion whatever else you may, call it not *Peace*. Whatever it may be in theory, and should be in reason, whatever it might be in certain contingencies, whatever it may be at first and in earlier stages, to us, in our circumstances and relations, in the end its name is WAR! the war of brothers—sectional, civil, social, domestic—and a war of ages. Nor call it *Order*. It is *Anarchy* rather—dissolution, not of our National Union alone, but of sections, states, counties, municipalities, classes, interests, institutions, and whatever element of our civilization the solvent poison can enter. Nor call it *Liberty*; for a government strong enough to bind up the ruin it opens, must be no other than *Despotism*; not only political, but over speech and thought; whose iron shall not only fetter the body, but enter into the soul. Nor call it *Life*. For the pressure requisite to stifle anarchy, and coerce the loosened and maddened elements to order, must suffocate and crush life, political and social. Its name is DEATH. And Dissolution—the plague we now invoke—will work on after political death, still preying on the body of our civilization, like a worm in the grave; while a Skepticism, sneering at patriotism, honor, heroism, liberty and God, shall come forth like a Ghoul from the tomb, to disport itself with the ashes of our Great Dead, and empoison the air of the world for centuries.

But I will not look that way. I turn from the terrible picture to which I have pointed to enhance our gratitude to our God for our National Union, preserved to us, notwithstanding our unworthiness, so long, and to stimulate our prayer and effort that it may still stand between us and the abyss into which we have looked. I thank God that the hideous picture of it sketched, is yet but picture; that yet we can stretch our hands across State lines and clasp with brethren; that yet we can look from the Gulf to the Lakes, and from ocean to ocean, and say, *Our Country*. May God give us largeness of heart* this day to cherish, and love, and pray for all.

In behalf of the race of man, I thank God that a Union with which is garnered up so much of hope for human liberty, has lasted so long. I say, so much, not all. For associated with my thanksgiving for National Union this day, is my gratitude to God for the assurance that its ultimate triumph is placed above the caprices and passions of this hour; indeed, far above any single National experiment. Our failure may be the failure of the present historic cycle; may drive society wide of its present course through other disastrous despotie ages. But the Goal is ultimately certain, forewritten in prophecy and in history. God's Kingdom, that of Truth, Love and Liberty, shall yet live, and shall surely triumph. High above the policies or passions of the hour, above the change of empires and systems, stands the eternal ordinance, "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." *

* Isaiah 51: 6.



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